



# Latino Leadership Foundation Boards

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## About Hispanics in Philanthropy

Hispanics in Philanthropy (HIP) is a transnational network of grantmakers committed to strengthening Latino communities across the Americas. The HIP network connects and convenes funders, nonprofits, researchers, and other leaders to identify emerging needs among Latinos as well as best practices for responsive and effective funding of social change. HIP trailblazes new philanthropic models by leading collaborative initiatives and has provided grants and training to help build the capacity of more than 600 organizations and leaders, including afterschool programs, Latino arts centers, immigrant rights advocates, LGBT Latino leaders, housing for Latino older adults, neighborhood health centers, grassroots community organizers, multi-service organizations in rural areas, and economic development in Latin America. Additionally, HIP recently launched the first bilingual, bicultural crowdfunding platform, HIPGive, [hipgive.org](http://hipgive.org). For more information on HIP's programs, please visit [hiponline.org](http://hiponline.org). HIP is headquartered in Oakland, California, with offices in Florida, Mexico City, New York, and North Carolina.

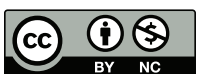
## About Foundation Center

Established in 1956, Foundation Center is the leading source of information about philanthropy worldwide. Through data, analysis, and training, it connects people who want to change the world to the resources they need to succeed. Foundation Center maintains the most comprehensive database on U.S. and, increasingly, global grantmakers and their grants — a robust, accessible knowledge bank for the sector. It also operates research, education, and training programs designed to advance knowledge of philanthropy at every level. Thousands of people visit Foundation Center's website each day and are served in its five library/learning centers and at more than 450 Funding Information Network locations nationwide and around the world. For more information, please visit [foundationcenter.org](http://foundationcenter.org) or call (212) 620-4230.

## Acknowledgements

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# FOREWORD

Dear Colleagues,

Hispanics in Philanthropy welcomes this opportunity by the Foundation Center to review available data on the diversity of the U.S. philanthropic sector, based on surveys of program officers, trustees and a small corps of CEOs.



Happily, growing numbers of trustees and CEOs are open to a strategy of nurturing diversified talent, pulling the best and the brightest into the mix and trusting that officers, trustees and a few of those who work as CEOs will advocate for the best outcomes for all as the key to a relevant and vital philanthropic sector.

Some would argue that this doesn't matter, that addressing specific racial and ethnic groups is not the answer. But more than 30 years later, the U.S. philanthropic sector, for all of its earnest efforts, has failed to secure successful strategies in eliminating, or even taking a major bite out of this country's yawning economic disparities that keep so many trapped in multigenerational cycles of poverty; its lack of educational opportunities for impoverished minorities, and the persistence of residual racism that festers and rightfully demands attention and healing.

This can be expedited, as this report recommends, by making a broader talent pool a priority; providing training and support for candidates and new trustees; helping Latinos to envision a career in philanthropy, and doing a better job of capturing and analyzing data on diversity in philanthropy.

We would like to express our appreciation for those who participated in the data collection for this report and hope that it will better inform the field of the gaps and opportunities for making philanthropy more representative of this country's best aspirations.

Diana Campoamor

# EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

*Latino Leadership: Foundation Boards* supports Hispanics in Philanthropy (HIP) in its efforts to build the pipeline for greater Latino leadership on foundation boards. The report presents data on foundation staff and board diversity and lifts up the perspectives of Latino leaders themselves, based on interviews with 15 current and former board members. The analysis synthesizes interviewees' experiences, highlighting the contributions Latinos bring to the boardroom, the challenges they face, and recommendations for moving forward.

## Diversity data

Hispanics/Latinos are 17 percent of the U.S. population. However, in 2013, the latest year for which there are data, Hispanics accounted for only 2.3 percent of foundation CEO or president positions (an increase from 1.5 percent in 2004). They were better represented in program officer roles where they held 11.2 percent of these positions in 2013, up from 8 percent 10 years earlier.

Current data about board diversity are not available. The most recent analysis examining a wide swath of foundations was in 2009, revealing that Latinos accounted for 4 percent of foundation boards, up from 3 percent in 2000.

The data (or lack thereof) highlight two concerns. One is the clear need for more efforts to diversify philanthropic leadership. The other is the need for more robust, more current, and more consistent data and analysis on foundation board diversity, so that the sector can accurately track its progress on diversity and inclusion.

## Latino board perspectives

**Trajectory:** According to interviewees, the typical trajectory to serving on foundation boards first began by serving on smaller nonprofit boards and building a track record of career success and community leadership. Most interviewees commented on the importance of networks and relationships. Still, the nominating process can be opaque, which is a challenge that can perpetuate the status quo and potentially hinder efforts at diversity.

**Experiences:** Overall, interviewees reported positive, rewarding experiences, particularly where they felt strong alignment between their interests and passions with their respective foundation's mission and approach. Tensions may arise in board discussions around subjects of particular importance to Latino communities, but dialogue tends to be unfailingly polite. Still, allies are critical when it comes to advocating for a certain issue, and many described shared interests with board members from other races and ethnicities.



**Contributions:** Latinos contribute a wealth of knowledge, experience, and cultural understanding in their role as trustees. Life experiences inform their perspectives and values. These trustees are also more than their ethnicity; other identities—female, LGBTQ, parent, etc.—also shape their perspectives. Some interviewees viewed their role on the board as directing more funding to Latino communities. Many agreed that Latino trustees give voice to all communities of color and marginalized communities more broadly. Latino trustees can also help put teeth into foundations’ stated commitment to diversity.

**Challenges:** Since board members are often chosen through the networks of those already serving, this may limit the pool of diverse candidates. In addition, institutional philanthropy is still relatively new for the Latino community, which has historically expressed generosity in the form of giving to family members, neighborhoods, and churches. Interviewees also noted that in addition to racial and ethnic diversity, foundations need greater diversity by class and age.

## Recommendations

Out of these conversations with past and current board members, five key recommendations related to increasing and supporting Latino leadership on foundation boards emerged:

Make it a priority to have the broadest possible pool of potential candidates;

1. Provide mentoring, training, and support for prospective and new board members;
2. Collect more—and better—data on diversity in philanthropy;
3. Increase awareness of institutional philanthropy in the Latino community; and
4. Invest in education as a means of investing more broadly in the leadership pipeline.



# INTRODUCTION

*“Demography is destiny in many ways. I think that it’s a natural evolution that there will be greater participation [of Latinos in philanthropy] and it will be easier to get people involved... [but] evolution is slow. There has to be more proactive activity by the foundations.”*

– *Latino foundation trustee*

In the context of rapidly changing demographics, it is more critical than ever for organizations to embrace diversity. Diversity is correlated with more innovation and better problem solving, decision making, and team performance. Companies with greater diversity achieve greater market share and financial returns.

In philanthropy, foundations that desire to increase their impact must commit to diversity. While the data show modestly increasing Latino representation in philanthropic leadership positions, progress is slow, and there is substantial room for improvement. As the opening quote illustrates, without intentional efforts, change will not take place quickly enough.

This report supports Hispanics in Philanthropy (HIP) in its efforts to build the pipeline for greater Latino leadership in philanthropy in the U.S., specifically on foundation boards. The report presents data on board, CEO, and program officer diversity and also lifts up the perspectives of Latino leaders themselves, based on a series of interviews. Our analysis synthesizes interviewees’ experiences, highlighting the contributions Latinos bring to the boardroom, the challenges they face, and recommendations for moving forward.

## About This Project

To understand trends in Latino leadership within philanthropy, Foundation Center reviewed available data on staff, board, and CEO diversity, as well as research on the impact of organizational diversity.

In addition, Foundation Center conducted 30- to 45-minute interviews with 15 former and current foundation board members, identified by Hispanics in Philanthropy.

We interviewed nine men and six women. By geography, ten were based in the West Coast (throughout California, Oregon, and Washington); three were in the Midwest

(Detroit and the Minneapolis-St. Paul area); and two were located on the East Coast (Hartford and New York City).

The predominant number of interviewees based in the West Coast—specifically California—reflects, in part, the realities of population distribution (California has the nation’s largest Hispanic population) and philanthropic activity (second to New York, California has the most foundations<sup>1</sup>).

1. Foundation Center, “Foundation Stats,” Foundation Center website, [data.foundationcenter.org](http://data.foundationcenter.org), accessed June 12, 2015.

# DIVERSITY TRENDS

## Diversity in leadership has a positive effect on organizational outcomes.

The corporate literature has much to say about the benefits of diversity. A 2015 McKinsey study found that companies with ethnically diverse leadership were 35 percent more likely to have financial returns above their national industry medians.<sup>1</sup> Gender-diverse companies were 15 percent more likely to outperform their peers. The authors summarized: “More diverse companies, we believe, are better able to win top talent and improve their customer orientation, employee satisfaction, and decision making, [leading] to a virtuous cycle of increasing returns.”

Another McKinsey analysis found that during the financially volatile years of 2008 through 2010, companies with diverse executive boards achieved far better financial performance compared to less diverse companies, with differences in returns exceeding 50 percent.<sup>2</sup> This held true

not only in the United States, but also in three European countries. Among diverse companies, the researchers identified a clear focus on performance, as well as faster and more creative responses to market shifts and new customer needs.

These findings suggest that for philanthropy, diversity can lead to more effective grantmaking and organizational impact. In a 2013 survey by the Center for Effective Philanthropy, nearly half of foundation CEOs believed that foundations would be able to create more impact if their leadership teams were more racially diverse. And 47 percent believed that foundations would be able to create more impact if their boards were more racially diverse.<sup>3</sup>

This requires a concerted effort by foundations to increase and support diversity in their leadership. Many affinity

## Additional Resources

There is a large body of work and activity to increase diversity, equity, and inclusion in philanthropy. The following is a non-exhaustive list of resources:

**BoardSource** supports excellence in nonprofit board service and offers trainings, best practices, and a blog, [exceptionalboards.com](http://exceptionalboards.com).

The **Council on Foundations** created a series of guides to help foundations consider how diverse and inclusive practices might advance foundations’ missions.

[Ten Ways for Community Foundations To Consider Diversity and Inclusive Practices](#)

[Ten Ways for Family Foundations To Consider Diversity and Inclusive Practices](#)

[Ten Ways for Independent Foundations To Consider Diversity and Inclusive Practices](#)

The **Council of Michigan Foundations** launched in 2008 a six year initiative, [Transforming Michigan Philanthropy Through Diversity and Inclusion](#), and released reports related to its learnings.

**D5** is a five-year coalition of foundations to advance philanthropy’s diversity, equity, and inclusion (DEI). Its **robust collection** of research and tools includes a series of annual reports tracking progress in the philanthropic sector, as well as a DEI self-assessment.

**Joint Affinity Groups (JAG)** is a network of collaborating affinity groups committed to a more just and equitable distribution of philanthropic resources. In 2002, JAG published [The Meaning and Impact of Board and Staff Diversity in the Philanthropic Field: Findings From a National Study](#).

The **Philanthropic Initiative for Racial Equity** targets institutional and structural racism in communities through capacity building, education, and convening of grantmakers and grantseekers.

**Rockefeller Philanthropy Advisors** created a guide, [Diversity, Inclusion and Effective Philanthropy](#), to explain how diversity and inclusion can be tools for more effective grantmaking.



groups, including HIP, have been leading the charge for years. In addition, D5, a coalition of funders dedicated to advancing philanthropy’s diversity, equity, and inclusion, has been working for the past five years to see that foundation staff and leadership more closely reflect U.S. demographic trends. As the D5 initiative sunsets, the coalition has developed a suite of tools and resources to encourage and equip foundations to take meaningful action.

Currently, the demographics of foundation leadership do not reflect the nation’s overall diversity. Latinos represent a very small percentage of philanthropic leadership, particularly in board and CEO positions. When Latinos are 17 percent of the U.S. population, there is undeniably room for growth for Latinos in leadership.

**Hispanics/Latinos have been relatively well represented in program officer positions.** The share of Hispanic/Latino program officers increased from 8 percent in 2004 to 11.2 percent in 2013 (Figure 1).

**There has been slight growth among Latino CEOs and presidents, but progress has been slower with more fluctuations.** In 2004, Latinos represented 1.5 percent of leaders in philanthropy; in 2013, that proportion increased to 2.3 percent (Figure 2). During the 10-year period,

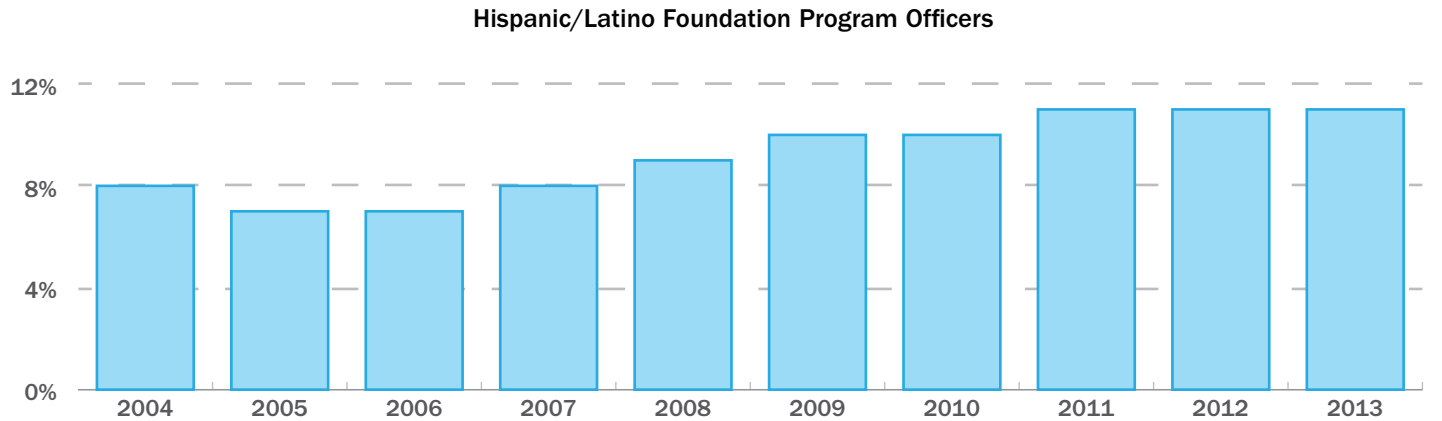
Latino representation peaked in 2010 at 3.1 percent and then steadily declined.

Table 1. Foundation Board Diversity Trends, 2000, 2004, and 2009

Board/Trustees	2000	2004	2009
Race/Ethnicity			
Caucasian	90%	88%	85%
African American	6%	7%	7%
Hispanic/Latino	3%	3%	4%
Asian/Pacific Islander	1%	2%	2%
Gender			
Female	34%	36%	38%
Male	66%	64%	62%

Source: Council on Foundations, *Foundation Management Series*. The Council on Foundations periodically collects data about board composition, provided by 720 foundations in 2000, 648 foundations in 2004, and 517 foundations in 2009. The most recent analysis available is from a 2010 survey of foundations’ 2009 information.

Figure 1. Share of Hispanics/Latinos in Program Officer Positions, 2004–2013



Source: Council on Foundations, *Grantmakers Salary and Benefits Report*, based on responses to an annual survey of foundations and giving programs, provided by 688 to 864 foundations each year. The title Chief Giving Officer refers to executives who manage corporate foundations or corporate giving programs.





Changes in board diversity have been almost negligible. According to survey data from the Council on Foundations, Latino representation on foundation boards increased from 3 percent in 2000 to 4 percent in 2009 (Table 1). Other populations did not fare much better, although there was modest growth for women on foundation boards.

The most recent analysis examining a wide swath of foundations was in 2009. However, a sense of more recent trends can be found from a study conducted by the Greenlining Institute, which analyzed the boards of the top 48 foundations by asset size. The study found that Latino representation on large foundation boards was 8 percent in 2009 and dropped slightly to 6 percent in 2012 (Table 2). In fact, 60.5 percent of top foundations in 2012 had no Latino board members.

Although more recent data about board diversity are not readily available, an informal review of the top 15 foundations by asset size found that about 5 percent of trustees are Latino.

Clearly, more representative and more current data are needed. Indeed, D5 has advocated for more robust data and has worked to improve the data collection mechanism

that currently exists. To this end, in Fall 2014, Guidestar and D5 announced an initiative that would make it easier for foundations and nonprofits to report diversity data about their boards.<sup>4</sup> It is hoped this initiative will yield more up-to-date information about nonprofit and philanthropic leadership. Tracking this data over time will be important to understand how the field is progressing, as well as to identify gaps and opportunities.

Table 2. Foundation Board Diversity, 2009 and 2012

Board/Trustees	2009	2013
Race/Ethnicity		
African American	13%	13%
Hispanic/Latino	8%	6%
Asian/Pacific Islander	5%	6%

Source: Greenlining Institute, *Foundation Board Diversity: No Change in Diversity Since 2009, 2013.*

Figure 2. Share of Hispanics/Latinos in CEO, President, and Chief Giving Officer Positions, 2004–2013



Source: Council on Foundations, *Grantmakers Salary and Benefits Report*, based on responses to an annual survey of foundations and giving programs, provided by 688 to 864 foundations each year. The title Chief Giving Officer refers to executives who manage corporate foundations or corporate giving programs.

# EXPERIENCES

*In order to build and nurture a robust leadership pipeline, it is helpful to understand how current foundation trustees arrived at their positions and how they view their experiences.*

## Trajectory to serving on foundation boards

**The typical trajectory begins by serving on smaller nonprofit boards.** The pathway to serving on a foundation board is typically gradual and “not an overnight thing,” in the words of one trustee. Several trustees described first becoming involved with local community organizations and later moving on to regional or state-wide institutions. “You don’t just start at the [large foundation] boardroom,” stated an interviewee. Another interviewee shared a similar sentiment: “To be a trustee, it really is the proven track record—you start on smaller boards and you show that you’ve earned the right to be considered for a large philanthropic board.”

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A track record of career success and community leadership can make one attractive to foundations. Several trustees noted that foundations perceived prominence and recognition within individuals’ respective fields to be a strong indicator of the leadership, connections, and skills one might bring to a board.

**Networks matter.** One of the most frequent refrains we heard from interviewees about their pathway to board participation was: “A board member knew me and

recommended me.” It is clear that relationships matter and play an important role in being invited to serve. As one interviewee observed, “Foundation boards are relatively small. They have to want you and trust you to be there.”

Some interviewees were part of the philanthropic network through their professions, working in nonprofits or corporate social responsibility initiatives or as former grantees. Others participated in aspects of the foundation’s work before becoming board members, such as serving on an advisory committee or speaking at a foundation-supported event. In some cases, as Latino trustees rolled off boards, there was a search for other Latinos to replace their seats.

Those who were less familiar with philanthropy were recommended through their networks to foundations interested in having Latino representation on their boards. “I hadn’t had much of an experience or exposure to the [foundation],” explained one interviewee. “The [foundation] has a very esteemed, distinguished board, but they had never had a Hispanic board member. They saw the need to bring that perspective, so I was sought after.”

**The nominating process can be opaque.** While some interviewees were approached by colleagues with whom they were already acquainted, a number of others had no idea how their names were brought forth to their foundations’ nominating committees. “The way I was invited to be considered was completely unknown to me,” said one foundation trustee. “Board members are selected through this invisible process, behind the screen.”

This lack of transparency can perpetuate the status quo and potentially hinder efforts at diversity. A Harvard Business Review piece articulated the weaknesses of relying solely on networks or even a progression of board seats to landing on a corporate board: “Neither is particularly transparent or relies on objective measures and given that many boards are stubborn bastions of White masculinity, pursuing the ‘right’ network can be fraught, especially for women and other diverse candidates.”<sup>5</sup>





Although from the outside, the recruitment and selection process is a bit of a black box, one interviewee was able to reflect on his appointment from the perspective of now serving on a foundation: “[When I was recruited] I did not know anyone on the nominating committee. They conducted due diligence, solicited feedback from board members, conducted further scrutiny and review of the individual’s qualifications, experiences, etc. I know that because I now go to nominating meetings, so I know it’s a very serious undertaking to see who brings the experiences and qualifications they’re looking for.”

“ The way I was invited to be considered was completely unknown to me.... Board members are selected through this invisible process, behind the screen. ”

## What it’s like serving on foundation boards

**Overall, interviewees reported positive, rewarding experiences.** By and large, interviewees felt serving on a foundation board lined up with their life and career missions, and there was great fulfillment in bringing their experiences, skills, and knowledge to inform philanthropic strategies. These positive reports reflect the strong alignment many felt between their interests and passions with the foundation’s mission and approach. “My wife and I give [financially],” described one trustee, “but we’ve never given as much as since I’ve been on foundations. It’s just a lot more fun to do it.”

Interactions with intelligent, engaged peers in the boardroom and with grassroots leaders were deeply satisfying. “I so look forward to board meetings,” said one trustee. “The discussion is rich. The diversity of opinions is very satisfying. I get exposed to a lot of...rich information and points of view.”

Many were grateful for the learning experience, to understand how philanthropy engages with communities. Others cited opportunities to learn about governance, philosophies of giving, and subjects outside their areas of expertise.

## Diversity within the Hispanic Community

Although popular culture and media often focus on the differences between ethnic and racial groups, there is much greater diversity within groups – and Latinos are no exception. The U.S. government adopted the term Hispanic in the 1970s in order to account for people from Mexico, Puerto Rico, Cuba, and Central and South America. The majority of Hispanic-Americans identify themselves by their family’s country of origin; only one in four prefers a pan-ethnic label like Hispanic or Latino.<sup>1</sup>

In considering the experiences, contributions, and challenges of Latino board members, it is important to recognize this diversity. Individuals from Colombian versus Dominican backgrounds will not necessarily share the same views. Even those from the same country of origin may have

different histories and perspectives—take the remarkable diversity in Brazil, with a sizable Afro-descendant population and a multitude of indigenous peoples, distinct ethnic groups with their own languages.

Add to that differences among U.S. regions, and it is clear that there is no one Latino experience or perspective. As a trustee described, “We are a complex community with a lot of pulling forces and tensions.” In light of this diversity, we are mindful that this report, which incorporates the views of a very small sample of Latinos in philanthropy, paints the issues with broad strokes.

1. Taylor, Paul et al. “**When Labels Don’t Fit: Hispanics and Their Views of Identity**,” Pew Research Center, April 4, 2012.



**Tensions do arise, although board discussions tend to be unfailingly polite.**

It was not uncommon for interviewees to experience, on occasion, a difficult conversation or a strong difference of opinion with their colleagues. Examples included discussions about support for undocumented immigrants or funding for Latino communities. Most noted that these tensions arose from differences in life experience. “These are all decent, caring human beings who just don’t have a perspective on where you’re coming from,” explained one trustee. “They don’t have it in their own life experience. So it’s critically important that we be there.”

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Many felt the way to handle these situations was through education. They did not shy away from speaking up and representing their point of view, but they tried to do it in ways that invited meaningful dialogue rather than confrontation—by asking strategic questions, explaining nuances, and sharing information coming from local, community-based sources. One trustee put it this way, “You have to be comfortable speaking up, but you have to speak up in a way that’s not confrontational.”

While disagreements are best handled with respect and tact, several trustees mentioned how “nice” dialogue in the boardroom can be and that it can be difficult to navigate through the politeness to have authentic conversations. “People are civil, and they’re very smart about not burning bridges,” explained one newer trustee. “My concern is, does that mean we’re overly polite and nice and that we’re not going to have courageous conversations either?”

There may also be a time and a place for direct confrontation. One trustee who advocated a “measured, educational approach” served with a fellow board member who was much more outspoken. He recognized the value of a “both-and” approach: “The activism of the individual I mentioned was complemented by the more subtle approach of [another board member]. I think confrontation in that case brought something to a head that needed to be brought to a head. Had we approached it more subtly—and she may have approached it more subtly in prior years—it wouldn’t have worked.”

**Allies are critical.** Particularly when it comes to advocating for a certain issue, it is imperative to have support from other trustees. In lifting up the importance of allies, one trustee observed, “It’s important to have a Latino at the table, but I don’t think that’s enough.”

Many interviewees described shared interests with, for example, their African-American colleagues. According to one board member, “A good trustee will always establish a liaison on the board. These are the dynamics of any group. You start thinking about alliances. The allies that I had, when they understood my position...then they would come in and offer their own perspective, using their own ethnicity or perspective.”

When that support is not there, a trustee can be in an incredibly vulnerable position. To put it bluntly, “It’s a numbers game. You don’t think that the CEO counts the numbers?” This was the insight one board member received early on. “I thought you just speak up, and you speak your mind. But it’s not that easy.”

A survey by the Center for Effective Philanthropy supports this view, finding that the number of people of color on a board is related to perceptions of equality of opportunity to influence the board.<sup>6</sup> In boardrooms with only one or two people of color, racial-minority board members rated less equality in opportunities to influence the board than their non-minority colleagues. They also perceived less equality than minority board members serving on boards with three or more other racial minorities. This suggests that greater overall racial/ethnic representation on foundation boards improves full participation from board members of color.



# CONTRIBUTIONS

Latinos in philanthropic leadership contribute a wealth of knowledge, experience, and cultural understanding. These assets are important in foundation boards, where trustees have considerable influence over institutional direction, strategy, and policy. In the words of one trustee, “It is important to be at the table in a leadership role to give our perspective as people make decisions.... And [foundations] make big decisions.”

**Life experiences—including ethnic identity—inform perspectives and values.** Our interviewees came from a broad range of backgrounds. Some were immigrants; others were the children of immigrants. Some had experiences of poverty, working in the fields, and deportation. Others were recipients of the types of programs that foundations support. These personal experiences have inexorably shaped their views and are critical to informing boardroom discussions or raising questions that might not otherwise be asked. In addition, some noted that these experiences can translate into a distinctly entrepreneurial and creative approach to philanthropy.

With these lived experiences come a cultural understanding that can inform discussions and foundation strategy. Several cited the importance of churches: One trustee was able to help a foundation see that the church could be a resource for communications efforts with the Latino community. Others had examples of explaining the centrality of family or other nuances that might not be obvious to those outside the culture. “[Other trustees] were helping those poor people over there,” described an

“For me, I was helping my people. I wasn’t looking across some great divide. These [people] were me: where I came from, who I relate to, who I identify with.”

interviewee. “For me, I was helping my people. I wasn’t looking across some great divide. These [people] were me: where I came from, who I relate to, who I identify with.”

“You don’t come to these organizations as a representative of one group; you come as a member in all subject areas, and you bring sort of a dash of Latino to the mix.”

At the same time, constantly speaking up for the Latino community can take its toll. “I am conscious of—‘Oh, there goes the Latino again, bringing that Latino perspective,’” observed an interviewee. “But if I don’t speak up, who will? Do I rely on my Anglo-American colleague to raise the issue of Latino needs in [region]? No, the burden falls on me, whether I choose to recognize it or not. And I do recognize it. I am the voice of the Hispanic community.”

**Individuals are more than their ethnicity.** Trustees are selected not only because they represent a particular racial or ethnic group; they are also chosen for their skillsets, professional knowledge, and leadership. In addition, other identities—being a woman, a parent of young children, LGBTQ, etc.—also contribute to trustees’ perspectives.

One interviewee described it this way: “As a Latino on a philanthropic board, I’m not there as a Hispanic; I’m there as an individual to contribute to the overall success of the organization.... You don’t come to these organizations as a representative of one group; you come as a member in all subject areas, and you bring sort of a dash of Latino to the mix.”

In fact, several noted that it was not enough to be Latino: Trustees had to bring other skills to the table in order to be considered to serve on foundation boards. “It isn’t enough



to be Hispanic and care about the community,” according to an interviewee. “[Foundation boards] are looking for people who have demonstrated some practical form of leadership.” As another trustee put it, “You don’t have to give up your Hispanic perspective to be an effective board member, but you can’t rely on being Hispanic to become a board member.”

Furthermore, being Latino does not guarantee a commitment to policies that benefit the Latino community and promote social justice. As with any group, there is diversity of opinion on social issues. Several interviewees stated that greater Latino representation may be important, but perhaps more important is representation by those with a commitment to justice.

“Some of the best alliances I’ve had have been with White, privileged folks who believe in social justice,” explained a trustee with extensive foundation board experience. “That’s been part of my sad experience on boards, where I came on thinking, ‘There’s another Latino; we’re bound to bond and work for a common purpose.’ But that’s not always true.”

“If you think Latino only,  
you’re going to miss the boat. You  
really have to think about a society  
that’s multicultural.”

Similarly, another trustee observed, “In some extreme cases, I’ve seen Latino leaders who seem to resent critical parts of what it means to be Latino, such as representing their working-class background.... Ethnic identity doesn’t guarantee that you’re going to make impact whatsoever, and it doesn’t guarantee you’re going to make impact with the Latino community.”

**Some trustees view their role as directing more funding to Latino communities.** A number of interviewees mentioned they would like to see proportionate philanthropic dollars going to Latino communities. As one trustee noted, “There’s a need for foundations to invest in Latino communities. A lot of money is not necessarily going into the Latino community, and I think it’s very important, especially given the growth and the needs, and that impact that a healthy Latino community can have.”

Another stated, “Latino-led organizations serving Latinos continue to be undercapitalized,” and noted the opportunities foundations have for capacity building by investing in these organizations. Several interviewees drew attention to the needs of Latino communities in rural areas—for example, in central California, a region with large Latino populations, high levels of poverty, and scant philanthropic activity.

However, some recognized that this has to be done with sensitivity. “You might be perceived as wearing your ethnicity on your sleeve...that you only care about Latinos or minorities, and you’re overlooking the concerns of the general population.”

The demographic data can be used to bolster the arguments for funding Latino communities. “I could back up [my decision] by the fact that the population warranted that kind of attention.... It was long overdue. But it does scare people. It makes people think, ‘Great, now we have a Latino guy. As we predicted, he’s going to want to do everything for Latinos.’ Even if it’s the right thing to do.”

**Latino trustees give voice to communities of color and marginalized communities.** The Latino community shares common struggles with other communities of color, and opportunities exist to leverage these efforts. One trustee noted, “The alignment around issues that I cared about and what my African-American colleagues cared about was really good. As we talk about the needs of [region] we know we’re especially talking about the needs of Latino and African-American residents.”





Ultimately, interviewees saw their role as promoting justice for all communities, not just for Latinos. “If you only think Latino only, you’re going to miss the boat,” summed up another board member. “You really have to think about a society that’s multicultural.”

Many Latino trustees sought to bridge the divide that can exist between foundations and the communities they serve—“not just giving money from afar and expecting the reports on how the money was used.” One suggested holding board meetings at grantee sites, to give trustees more exposure to neighborhoods where grantees operate. Another, at a community foundation, advocated (unsuccessfully) for a fund in which anyone could contribute any amount of money, which would then be distributed through a community-planning process.

It was noted that for many board members, their understanding of issues can be more theoretical and academic. Interviewees felt it was important for foundations and trustees to get input from those closer to the ground, from community leaders and those working at nonprofits.

**Latino trustees can help put teeth into foundations’ stated commitment to diversity.** Most foundations these days are conscientious of issues of diversity—if anything, societal expectations and pressures tend to promote and

“ **Latino-led organizations serving Latinos continue to be undercapitalized.** ”

value diversity. “I don’t think there’s any board out there saying, ‘We don’t want Hispanics on our board,’” observed an interviewee. Still, how foundations actualize their commitment to diversity can vary.

Interviewees acknowledged that it may be harder for family foundations to have diverse boards. But there was a strong expectation that community foundations should be more reflective of the communities they serve. And many trustees shared a desire to push their respective foundations further. Beyond mere representation or tokenism, the overarching goals are greater equity and inclusion, as well as impact for marginalized communities. “We need to increase the number of Latinos in philanthropy,” stated one interviewee, “because through that is how we begin to impact public policy, and it’s also the way we ultimately get to issues of equity.”

# CHALLENGES

The process of building diversity on boards in a meaningful way is no easy task. Interviewees highlighted a variety of challenges present in ensuring Latino voices are in the boardroom.

**Board members are often chosen through the networks of those already in the boardroom.** As noted earlier, networks matter and can provide entry into foundation leadership positions. But research shows that social and professional networks remain relatively homogenous, so the lack of diversity in boardrooms may ultimately limit the pool of diverse candidates.

At the same, one interviewee called on Latinos to be more concerted about pursuing networking opportunities, “We’re not networking. How did I get invited to do this? I knew people. A bunch of people sat around, probably older White guys, and said it would be nice to get a woman in here, maybe a Hispanic. Who do we know? Not many. That’s part of this—who do we know?”

“I was on the short list  
for everything.”

This may naturally change as more Latinos serve on boards, since Latinos tend to know other Latinos. That said, even the most diverse boards struggle with readily coming up with names of Latinos to suggest for consideration. As one interviewee stated, “It’s not because it’s against Hispanics or African Americans or women or other people of color; there’s an inner circle that’s self-sustaining, and it’s true of any organization.... We have to figure a way to break through that.”

Moreover, because networks can be small and self-reinforcing, it was clear that the same people were often called to serve. Observed one interviewee wryly, “I was on the short list of everything.”

**Engagement in institutional philanthropy is still relatively new for the Latino community.** Evidence of Latino generosity can be found in financial and in-kind contributions to churches, families, and neighborhoods. In this sense, Latino engagement in philanthropy carries a long and rich tradition. However, Latinos may not have much familiarity with foundations, and to the extent that they do, foundations tend to be associated with the Fords, the Carnegies, and the Rockefellers, perceived as an arena only for those who are extremely wealthy.

This view is not surprising given the history of U.S. philanthropy and the specific tax structure in which it developed, allowing individuals (and corporations) to deduct charitable donations from their taxable income. Latin America’s tax systems generally offer fewer incentives to give. Traditionally, the responsibility of caring for the poor was seen as the purview of churches and governments. That view may be shifting, as philanthropy grows globally. However, interviewees still noted the disconnect between Latino giving and institutional philanthropy, creating a barrier to participation in foundation boardrooms.

Many interviewees described a serendipitous path to foundation boardrooms, rather than an intentional one. One interviewee shared, “I don’t think it would have ever crossed my mind to apply for a job at a foundation.” With giving circles focused on engaging diverse communities, community foundations can increase awareness about philanthropy and help to dispel the myth that it is only for people who are extremely wealthy.

**In addition to racial and ethnic diversity, there is a need for greater diversity by class and age.** Several made the observation that even as boards work to improve their racial and ethnic diversity, the class divide is a bigger challenge. Foundation trustees tend to be older individuals who have had remarkable career success and have accumulated sizable wealth.

One barrier to greater participation is the expectation that board members be tremendously wealthy, a potentially intimidating prospect for Latinos, for whom generational wealth is relatively new. If the path to the boardroom is serving on nonprofits, the give-get requirements of large





nonprofits, which can be upwards of \$25,000, can be prohibitive. As one interviewee reflected, “I feel very lucky because I’m not a millionaire, and I’m on this board.”

Even without this notion that Latinos must be wealthy to serve on boards, there is still a significant class divide between Latinos serving on boards and the Latino community for which they advocate. One board member reflected, “I think what’s happening among Latino leaders broadly speaking—I include myself in this now—is that we seem to be becoming our own political class and our own economic class, that is getting further isolated from working class folks, immigrant folks, and communities on a transnational level. Certainly not all of us, but as a group, we seem to be getting further removed from that, as have other communities of color. That’s where I see a regression. That, frankly, is more concerning to me than the progress we’ve made in terms of being well represented.”

**“ If you really want change, you have to have young people involved. ”**

Several interviewees also mentioned the need for greater board diversity by age, with a need for more representation by young people. Anecdotally, boards skew older, with the youngest members being in their forties. Bringing new blood into philanthropy would not only offer fresh perspectives but also would help build the pipeline for new talent for foundation leadership. In the words of one trustee, “If you really want change, you have to have young people involved.”

# RECOMMENDATIONS

*In view of the experiences, contributions, and challenges faced by Latinos serving on foundation boards, the following recommendations rose to the surface.*

**1. Make it a priority to have the broadest possible pool of potential candidates.** Not surprisingly, the most diverse boards were ones that made board diversity an explicit priority. One thing is clear: More diversity does not happen on its own. Foundations need to be intentional in their efforts to attract Latinos.

This expectation should exist at every level, from program officers (who may eventually become foundation leaders), foundation CEOs and presidents, as well as trustees. One trustee observed, “I think [foundations] need to make it a priority and have a strategy on how to achieve it and that’s it’s not just lip service.” Another shared, “That hasn’t been a priority.... One of the things I want to see from HIP is some pressure on foundations to be more self-reflective. Does your board represent the community it’s funding?”

One suggestion from a number of interviewees was to create and maintain a “name bank” of sorts, a pool of candidates with their areas of expertise and interest, so that viable candidates are at hand when referrals are requested and searches are undertaken.

As mentioned earlier, for family foundations, board diversity can be a challenge, as trustee positions are typically held by family members and close associates. Large foundations may have more resources to conduct a wider search, but smaller foundations are often limited to searching within their own geographic boundaries and personal networks, shrinking the pool of diverse candidates.

Yet, there are examples of family foundations—and others—prioritizing diversity and successfully shifting the makeup of their boards. The New York City-based Jessie Smith Noyes Foundation, for example, went from an all-White board made up of family members and friends to a majority non-family member board, of whom more than half are women and 44 percent are non-White.

**2. Provide mentoring, training, and support for prospective and new board members.** From handling conflicts to navigating the political dynamics of board membership, board participation can be a challenging and sometimes mysterious enterprise. Those who were already familiar with philanthropy (usually through their professional work) had a more seamless transition into serving on a foundation board.

But others experienced a learning curve and noted the usefulness of “demystifying the role of the board of trustees” by providing board development opportunities, so that individuals have the preparation and skillsets required to be effective trustees (e.g., debt financing, governance, etc.).

To this end, the Hispanic Foundation of Silicon Valley created a Latino Board Leadership Academy to recruit, train, and assist in placing Latinos on nonprofit boards. In its fifth year, the academy has graduated nearly 200 fellows, with 75 percent having been appointed to nonprofit boards.

Another effective approach cited by several trustees was the importance of having one-on-one meetings with fellow trustees outside of formal meetings, as a way to get to know and understand other board members, identify potential allies, and educate and inform one another on key issues.

Likewise, mentoring played a big role in promoting success in the boardroom. One trustee shared, “When I first came on board, the great thing was that I developed two mentors.... That was probably one of the most beneficial factors in terms of my ability to really be successful. One of them I knew very well, and to feel a real sense of support and confidence in my ability to serve at the same level and capacity as everyone else was a real factor in my ability to serve successfully.”

With that in mind, one thing to consider is how to bring people along into positions of greater authority and responsibility. Recognizing the skillsets of newer board members, placing them in leadership positions or on influential committees, and providing encouragement along the way can make a difference.





### 3. Collect more—and better—data on diversity in philanthropy.

The latest comprehensive data on board diversity is from 2009. Clearly, philanthropy can benefit from more standardized data collection and analysis regarding diversity.

D5 is collaborating with GuideStar to collect diversity data from nonprofits, including foundations. The voluntary program aims to advance transparent and uniform data collection about staff, board, and volunteer demographics, supplementing information available from the IRS. This will require transparency on the part of foundations to share demographic information. As a positive sign, a number of leaders of large foundations pledged their support for this effort.

Some questions for future research include:

- What are the latest statistics on the racial/ethnic diversity of foundation boards?
- Are diversity data reaching foundation leaders?
- How does diversity data inform organizational practices and policies?
- How many people of color serve on multiple foundation boards? Is this skewing the picture of diversity, or are real numbers of board members of color changing?
- What are the areas of expertise of Latino board members (e.g., education, civil rights, arts, etc.)? Are there areas where greater Latino representation is needed?

**“We’re at a point where there’s a lot of competition for our talent.... I think we’re at a point where we’re making conscious decisions about where we want to be and whether or not our voice is going to really matter.”**

### 4. Increase awareness of institutional philanthropy in the Latino community.

Interviewees offered a variety of ideas for building awareness and communicating opportunities in institutional philanthropy. One trustee noted, “This is where HIP comes in: Create a vision that...gets incorporated into as many minds as possible about organized philanthropy, what it does, what it can do.”

An important component of this messaging effort is to communicate the impact of being involved in foundation decision making, particularly the opportunity to contribute to the community in a more strategic way. Just as giving to churches, families, and neighborhoods has impact, Latinos need to see that by serving through foundations, they can have an even larger impact on issues they care about. One trustee said, “It’s a case of making [philanthropy] exciting and interesting and grooming the next generation for this.”

In addition, as part of the education and awareness-raising process, it is important to provide opportunities to be involved in the work of foundations in a capacity that does not require becoming a board member. For example, one foundation has an awards program for leaders diminishing inequities. Members of the community are brought in to participate on the panel that reviews nominations. Another foundation invites non-board members to sit on board committees. This introduces them to the foundation’s work and also provides a means to identify potential board members. Fellowship programs targeting people of color can also play a role in identifying leaders with potential and acquainting them with philanthropy. Some singled out the potential role of community foundations to engage Latino philanthropists and leaders, especially as a new generation of wealth emerges.

On the flipside, foundations must prove themselves to be trustworthy and well-intentioned. Latino communities need to see that foundations really care about their needs and understand the issues. “We’re at a point where there’s a lot of competition for our talent. There are many organizations, depending on what community you live in, sometimes you have a recycling of the same people going on different boards.... I think we’re at a point where we’re making conscious decisions about where we want to be and whether or not our voice is going to really matter.”



**5. Invest in education as a means of investing more broadly in the leadership pipeline.** Many interviewees attributed their career success to educational opportunities. Foundation investments in educational supports, opportunities, and equity ultimately contribute to developing Latino professionals and leaders—leaders who may one day contribute, in return, to the philanthropic community.

Latino students have made improvements in high school completion. And the number of Latinos earning an associate degree or higher increased 71 percent in ten years, from 3.8 million in 2004 to 6.5 million in 2013.<sup>7</sup> Still, Latinos have lower levels of attainment than other groups. In 2013, 22 percent of Latinos (25 years and older) earned an associate degree or higher, compared to Asians (60 percent), Whites (46 percent), and African Americans (31 percent).

Research has shown that Latino students—and other students of color—face inequities in our public education system. They have less access to advanced courses, they are less likely to be enrolled in gifted and talented education programs, and they are more likely to be taught by first-year instructors. These inequities affect their college- and career-readiness, ultimately impacting their professional opportunities.

An investment in education is an investment in the leadership pipeline. Said one interviewee, “Education is the economic and social equalizer in society.... Once you have education, professional and other experiences will follow. Education is fundamental.”





## Endnotes

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